

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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MASSACHUSETTS SELECTED BY U.S. DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AS SITE FOR MEDICARE PILOT PROGRAM

*PROGRAM WAS CHAMPIONED BY REP. MARKEY; LIFTS MEDICARE RESTRICTIONS ON
DEPARTURES FROM THE HOME FOR MA HOME HEALTH PATIENTS WITH
PERMANENT, SEVERE DISABILITIES*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Representative Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, today participated in a press conference with Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Tommy Thompson and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Administrator Mark McClellan to announce that Massachusetts and two other states have been selected as sites for a two-year demonstration project established in the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 (see attached language). Rep. Markey was the author of the demonstration project provision in the House of Representatives.

“Today’s selection of Massachusetts as a site for the demonstration project is welcome news for severely and permanently disabled Medicare home health patients and their families,” Rep. Markey said. “Medicare home health beneficiaries who have late-stage Alzheimer’s Disease, ALS, Parkinson’s Disease and other severe, chronic and disabling conditions should not have to fear that their next trip outside the home could cause their benefits to be terminated. Medicare beneficiaries and their families who battle these devastating diseases are everyday heroes – but even heroes need help. I am hopeful that the demonstration project announced today will provide a measure of help to Massachusetts home health patients and their families who are coping with these severe medical conditions,” Rep. Markey said.

The homebound demonstration project will enable Medicare home health patients in Massachusetts and the other two states who have permanent, severe and disabling medical conditions that meet the eligibility criteria in the homebound provision to leave home without regard to the length, frequency or purpose of their departures. Under current law, Medicare home health patients’ departures from the home can only be infrequent and of short duration, unless patients are leaving home to attend religious services or adult day care. The demonstration project will be in effect for two years, beginning in October 2004.

At the conclusion of the demonstration project, HHS will be required to report to Congress on the impact of the demonstration project on the provision of home health services; whether the demonstration resulted in increased expenditures; and what recommendations HHS has to permanently exempt permanently and severely disabled beneficiaries from restrictions on their departures from the home without causing additional costs to the Medicare program.

“I am convinced that lifting this outdated restriction for one of Medicare’s most vulnerable group of beneficiaries will significantly improve the quality of life for these patients and their families without increasing costs. I will continue to work to free these homebound patients from restrictions on their departures from the home, in Massachusetts and around the country,” Rep. Markey concluded.

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